

Accelerating Implementation of the 2007 Port of Spain Declaration on Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs)

REDUCING ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM

The 2007 Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government Summit produced the landmark Port of Spain Declaration on NCDs. An evaluation of successes and challenges in implementing the Declaration's commitments has been undertaken.ⁱ This fact sheet highlights evaluation results, the current situation and how we can accelerate action.

2007 NCD Declaration mandates: Public revenue derived from alcohol should be employed to strengthen the NCD response. Reducing alcohol-related harm was not specifically addressed

Where we are

- Developing and implementing policy on alcohol is seen as:
 - Politically 'challenging';
 - Contrary to economic interests (local production and tourism); and
 - Interfering with individual pleasure and social norms.
- There are limited examples of where positive policies are being pursued: one exception is the introduction of breathalysers for drink driving in Trinidad and Tobago.

The way forward

Goal: to achieve a 10% reduction of harmful use of alcohol.

Policies and plans

- Increase taxation on alcohol to reduce consumption and raise revenue for NCD prevention and control.
- Ban or regulate alcohol marketing and ban sports sponsorship.
- Adopt a comprehensive regional policy on alcohol reduction with a focus on young people.
- Standardise the regional minimum alcohol purchasing and drinking age.
- Harmonise and enforce drink driving laws and review alcohol licensing systems.
- Strengthen health systems to respond to this issue, e.g. integrating screening and interventions for alcohol problems in primary healthcare; develop clinical guidelines on management of alcohol misuse.
- Strengthen information systems and surveillance; harmonise alcohol indicators for more effective regional reporting and establish baselines for monitoring.

Supporting activities

- Agree on, and implement, CARICOM-wide measures on hazardous alcohol use.
- Adopt and adapt the breathalyser programme used in Trinidad & Tobago.
- Ensure zero tolerance towards drink driving / driving under the influence.
- Learn lessons from the regional tobacco experience where the vast majority of countries have signed up to the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.
- Designate a national focal point to coordinate alcohol-related action across multiple ministries.
- Build capacity for civil society organisations to better advocate for alcohol reduction strategies.
- Communicate messages on the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption to the public.
- Facilitate Alcoholics Anonymous groups and links with health services: establish referral systems.

We are making progress

An example: The Breathalyser Act in Trinidad and Tobago



The Breathalyser Act came into effect in Trinidad and Tobago from November 2009, with the aim of discouraging people from consuming alcohol and driving, a major contributor to a large number of accidents, fatalities and rising levels of ill health.

Penalties under the law range from a TT\$8,000 fine to five years' imprisonment. There is also the possibility of permanent disqualification from holding a driver's license. Police officers are empowered to stop motorists suspected of driving under the influence.

Although there continues to be a relatively high level of drink driving, especially at weekends and during national celebrations, widespread use of the breathalyser has contributed significantly to improved surveillance by the police, the ability to monitor trends in alcohol consumption, road safety planning and drug abuse prevention programming and advocacy. The Ministry of Health's National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme (NADAPP) collaborates with the police and other key stakeholders in raising awareness of the dangers of drinking and driving. It also uses opportunities to demonstrate the value of the breathalyser in saving lives, such as at major Carnival events and parties where the risk of people taking the wheel after a bout of heavy drinking is the highest.

Visit our website at www.onecaribbeanhealth.org for full Evidence Briefs from the evaluation, recommendations for accelerating action and much more on NCDs.

